

25 January 1961

BRIEF SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT OF SATELLITE
RECONNAISSANCE PROGRAM

1. In the early 50's the AF initiated studies under the 117-L program for the development of a satellite reconnaissance system. This program which later became the SAMOS program was aimed at direct readout and prior to its cancellation involved the expenditures of [redacted] dollars. The program used the ATLAS as a basic booster. The program was relatively open from a security point of view and provided very poor resolution. Only 1 partially successful flight ever occurred, and that was in 1960 after the first successful CORONA and resolution was greater than 100 feet.

2. When it became apparent that the 117-L program was not likely to be productive of useful intelligence, Drs. Land, Killian and Mr. Bissell went to work to develop plans for a simpler system using the basic THOR booster. This activity involved the presentation on 15 April of the CORONA program to the President. Paragraph 5 of this program (attached) outlines the administrative procedures which were agreed upon at that time. Essentially the project involved a joint activity between CIA and ARPA with CIA providing the Project Director (Mr. Bissell). The AF Ballistic Missile Division acted as the agent for ARPA. When ARPA dropped out of the space activities, their function of providing supervision over the development of the vehicle was taken over directly by the AF. The first successful CORONA flight occurred in February 1960. The program has become increasingly reliable since that time. In the spring of 1962, a higher resolution stereo system was incorporated in the CORONA program.

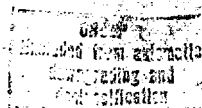
3. In the summer and fall of 1960, a special panel under Dr. Killian surveyed the entire aerial reconnaissance program and made recommendations for future efforts and established a streamlined organization for handling these programs within the AF. Basic to this study was preparation of satellite reconnaissance recommendations by USIB which for the first time laid down some ground rules on desirable resolutions. This review resulted in the cancellation of the direct readout system and the parallel AF E-5 program for

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NRO review(s) completed.

[REDACTED]
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recoverable versions which were never flown successfully. Instead, the program was diverted to the development of the A-6 (201) which was recently cancelled without a successful flight. [REDACTED]

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4. In the spring of 1962 a status report on the reconnaissance program was prepared for the White House and the Intelligence Board. [REDACTED]

It was, therefore, decided to proceed with the interim LANYARD program which used E-5 hardware in the CORONA system and hopefully would provide resolutions intermediate between CORONA/MURAL [REDACTED]. The first flight of LANYARD is scheduled for February 1963. [REDACTED]

Excerpt from 15 April 1958 paper approved by the White House on CORONA:

"5. Administration: CORONA is being carried out under the authority of the Advanced Research Projects Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency with the support and participation of the U. S. Air Force. ARPA has authorized, and will exercise general technical supervision over, the development of the vehicle. Detailed supervision of vehicle development is being performed by the Air Force Ballistic Missile Division acting as agent for ARPA. The Ballistic Missile Division is responsible also for the provision of necessary ground facilities, which are in any case required for the WS-117L program. CIA is participating in supervision of the technical development, especially as applied to the actual reconnaissance equipment, is undertaking all procurement that must be handled covertly, and has general responsibility for cover and for the maintenance of security. In the operational phase actual missile launchings will be carried out at Cooke Air Force Base by technical staffs of the companies concerned. Tracking will be carried out from stations being established by the Ballistic Missile Division. Recovery will be accomplished by a Navy task force. The line of command for these field activities of launching, tracking, and recovery will be through the Ballistic Missile Division. Subject to approval by the appropriate political authorities, the general schedule of launchings will be determined by the availability of vehicles and launching facilities. Specific timing within this schedule will be determined so far as possible on the basis of weather prevailing over target areas. For both cover and control purposes, weather will be reported through an already existing CIA channel and firing dates will be selected by the Central Intelligence Agency."

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TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE	1/25/63
TO: <i>EXEC DIRECTOR</i> DDCI			
M NO.	BUILDING		
REMARKS: This was prepared on a crash basis for DCI for his meeting with Gilpatric.			
FROM: DD/R			
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION	

FORM NO. 241
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

GPO : 1957—O—439445 (47)

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